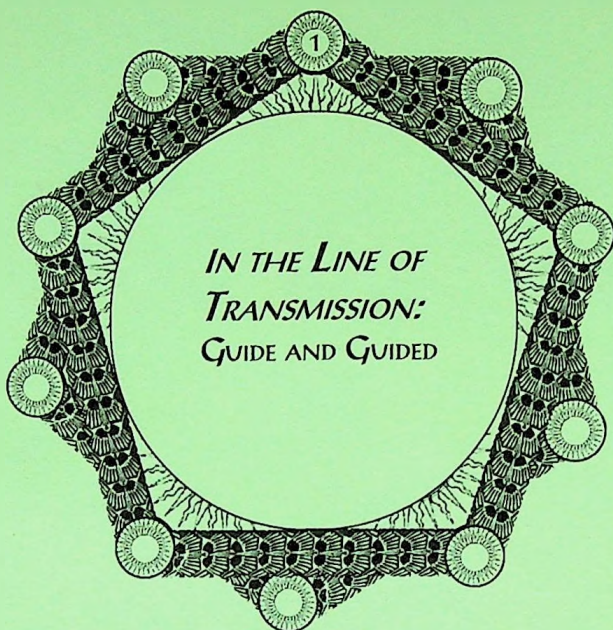


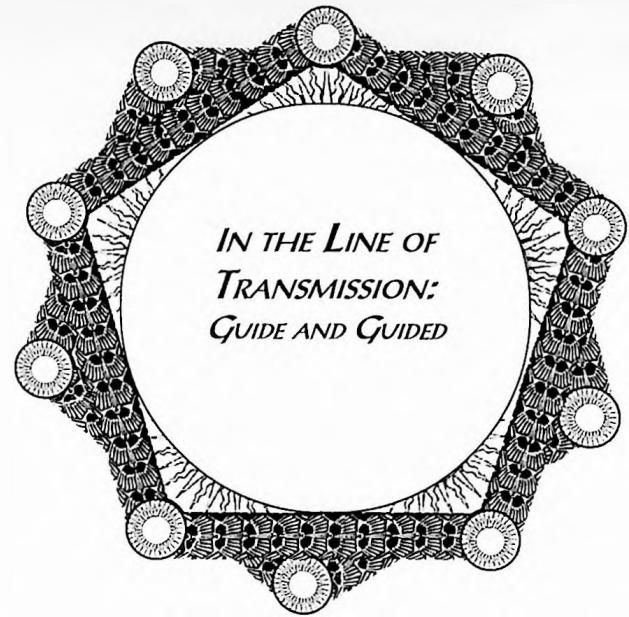
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



*IN THE LINE OF
TRANSMISSION:
GUIDE AND GUIDED*

by
Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid
The Circle Group

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Lecture by Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid
at the Zaawiya of
Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee
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GUIDE AND GUIDED

*Bismi-Llaahi-r-Rahmaani-r-Raheem
Yaa Allaahu, yaa Nuuru, yaa Haqqu, yaa Mubeenu,
Uksuni min nuurika, wa 'allimni min 'ilmika
wa fahhimni 'anka, wa asmi'ni minka, wa absirni bika.
Innaka 'alaa kulli shay'in Qadeer.*

*Yaa Sami'u, yaa 'Aleemu, yaa Haleemu,
yaa 'Aleeyu, yaa 'Adheemu,
Isma' dfa'ii bi-khasaaa'isi lutfika,
Aaameen, aaameen, aaameen.*

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.
O Allah, O Light, O Truth, O Obvious, Manifest,
Shower me with Thy Light, and teach me of Thy Knowledge,
and make me understand Thee, and make me hear Thee,
and make me see Thee.
Thou art Powerful over all things.

O Hearer, O Knower, O Gentle, O Powerful, O Mighty,
Listen to my prayers with the best of Thy Grace,
Amin, Amin, Amin.

INTRODUCTION

I want to speak to you today about some of the important and often misunderstood aspects of the tradition of Sufism, as it relates to the relationship between the *murshid* (teacher, guide) and *mureed* (student, seeker). Keep in mind it is our intention to have a series of five talks on related subjects within Sufic thought and practice that address the inner and outer journey of awakening to, or awareness of, our purpose, our place, and our challenge as human beings, as Muslims and as seekers of *al-Haqq* (the Truth).

I will address many subjects today: *baraka* (the transformative blessing), *tajalli* (irradiation or transmission), *bayat* (sincere commitment /agreement between the *murshid* and *mureed*), *subbat* (keeping the company of the *shaykh* and the good and sincere seekers). I will also address the resistance that some people have to seeing the above-mentioned topics as real and necessary aspects of the sincere seeker's personal awakening, development, insight and spiritual progress.

Before I dive into these subjects, I want to place these topics in a context by giving you a brief introduction to the tradition of the guide (*shaykh*, *pir o murshid*) in *Tasawwuf* and the necessity for a guide for those sincere individuals who wish to benefit and maximize their life's spiritual quest. In doing so I will, out of necessity, touch on subjects that we will go into more depth later in subsequent gatherings.

TRADITION OF THE TEACHER

It has always been the way, in the history of humanity, to have teachers of various sciences who receive the training and *ijazah* (authorization or written diploma) from those they studied with, in both the exoteric and esoteric sense. According to the *shuyukh*, such people have to have a certain kind of aptitude for this kind of "guidance." It is referred to as *irshaad*, a specific type of knowledge or *akhlaaq*, spiritual quality of character. It means they have a capacity to guide; but moreover, it's an authorization that comes because they are able to receive the *baraka* and understand intuitively the spiritual guidance and practices that awaken and bear fruit in the hearts of those who also aspire. Allah tells in Qur'an about those who are placed as leaders among us, by virtue of their striving and steadfastness:

Min al-mu'mineena rijaalun sadaqun maa'aahadu-Llaaha 'alayh.

Among the Believers are men who have been true to their Covenant with Allah. (33:23)

Those who have these specific qualities, just as all of us have specific qualities and capabilities, are identifiable as those who receive the *ijazah* (license) to teach others, to guide people to the liberating practice of *dhikru-Llaah* (remembrance of Allah), to the advanced application and understanding of Qur'an, Hadith, and awareness of the true value of *subbat*. These are people who, after years of study, practice and receptivity to the transmission of their *shaykh*, have developed the inherent ability to see clearly the signs of that Divine presence, and can point them out to others. They can say, "Look there, not here," or tell us, "What you are seeing is not really present." Or, they can tell us, "If you pay attention to 'this' you will open a doorway to a potential within you that you did not know you had." This ability is supported by Qur'an, Hadith, and the teachings of the *shuyukh*.

A classic example of the teacher and student can be found in Qur'an in the story of Khidr and Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*), found in Sūratu-l-Kahf. When Sayyidina Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) met with Sayyidina Khidr, Allah describes Khidr, saying:

Fa-wajadaa 'abdam-min 'ibaadinaa, aataynaahu rahmatam-min 'indinaa wa 'allamnaahu mil-ladunnaa 'ilmaa.

They found one of Our worshipers to whom We had given mercy from Our Self, and We had taught him knowledge directly from Our Own Presence. (18:65)

Hazrat Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) then asks to be his student:

Qaala labuu Muusaa, hal attabi'uka 'alaa an-tu'alimmani mimmaa 'ullimta rushdaa?

Musa said to him, "May I follow you on the condition that you teach me something of the Higher Truth which you have been taught?" (18:66)

And Khidr replies:

Qaala innaka lan tastatefa maa'ya sabraa. Wa kayfa tashiru 'alaa maa lam tuhi bibee khubraa?

[He whom they found, the sage al-Khidr] said, "Surely you will not be able to be patient with me. For how can you have patience with that which your knowledge cannot encompass?" (18:67-68).

Here, al-Khidr clearly is telling us that patience and perseverance is necessary to receive the depth and breadth of the knowledge that is available to the sincere seeker. For that it takes more than just asking, but tests and trials, which the story details. At the core of all these tests is trust, trust not only in the book knowledge, but in the insight, *baseerah*, of the guide—in this case, al-Khidr. Khidr represents more than a being, but a line of transmission. He is described in other texts as ever-living, in other words, living knowledge in every age, available to one who sees that need and seeks it out, who is willing to be guided. So each of us can, at the very least, seek and develop perseverance and patience.

SEEKING THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

Today, when we look around the world, there is so much need for patience and perseverance. Society is in a state of entropy; human beings' role is to carry on the *amaanaat* (trust) and to build their character, against that backdrop of the struggle between degenerative forces (physical, social, mental, emotional) and constructive forces. Even in the face of struggles and challenges, we have to strive to sustain the inner and outer environment, social stability, mental harmony, and emotional balance. Spiritually, this harmony comes from the inner attainment of *sakeenah* (tranquility) and a transcendent view of life, which includes but is not bound by the reality of *dunyaa* (the world).

To find that state of tranquility, our inner capacity must be accessed and, in a sense, a firewall must be built that gives us the choice to accept or not accept the 'pop ups' of worldliness. As we build our personal and collective strength, it will be reflected in society. The evolution of the soul is the key to creating an environment for growth and change. Remember at all times that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa 'Alaala*) enjoins the true Muslim, the *mu'min* (believer) to perform good actions and acts of kindness and to forswear evil.

To Him mount up all words of purity and the righteous deeds cause it to rise. As for those who plot evil, there is severe torment for them and their plotting shall, itself, perish. *Sūratu-l-Fatir* (35:10)

So, when we look at the world today it is easy to find spiritual degeneration and distractions/*ghaflah*. There have been many periods of forgetfulness in human history, but at no point has there been an absence of spiritual yearning on the part of certain individuals, nor of spiritual guidance from authorized teachers.

SUHBAT AND MUNAASABAT

Life is not easy, let alone when one is on a spiritual journey, which demands time that is not rewarded by money, or name, or fame, which are the major motivating desires in the world today. To journey on this path, we need the support of good companions (*subbat*).

Such companions are found in the circle of sincere seekers around a qualified guide. Like anything else in life, we humans are social beings. We gather together for specific purposes: sometimes just to survive, sometimes to be educated, at times for mere social interaction, at other times for spiritual support and upliftment. Allah (*Subhaanahu wa 'Alaala*) planted in our souls this social nature, along with the unique quality of conscious choice. Thus, we are guided further to choose the right people, even in the choice of the guide. Allah tells us in Qur'an the value of *subbat*:

Yaa ayyuha-lladbeena aamanu-t-taqui-Llaaha wa kuunuu m'da-s-saadiqeen.

O ye who believe, fear Allah and keep company with those who are true to their word. (*Sūratu Tawbah*, 9:119)

I will be discussing *subbat* more in future gatherings, but let me just preface those by saying that *subbat* is not the common social event of competitive egos, or exclusively 'study' in the traditional sense of intellectual engagement, or imparting of 'information.' It has all those elements, but it is a dynamic engagement of hearts, of people who are

related, through the *tareeqah* (way or path) and the *shaykh*, in a relationship of love, mutual respect, sincere concerns, and devotion. At times, this relationship comes through *dars* (lecture), or study of text, or gatherings for *muraaqabah*, or recitation of Qur'an and *d'aa* (supplication), at others times from informal dialogue, questions, and discussion. Whatever the specifics, the result is what is called in Farsi, *doost-e-vagheyi*, true friendship.

Indeed, *subhat* and companionship with the guide or expert has been one of the foundations of our way since the time of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Hazrat Umar (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) was reported to have said, "Has anyone attained perfection by only books?" It is as simple as understanding that one cannot become a carpenter without sitting in the company of a carpenter. One cannot become a tailor without the companionship of a tailor, etc. In short, one cannot attain the higher levels of spiritual knowledge and more spiritual insight without the companionship of an expert who is trained to guide us.

Let there be no mistake, the Naqshbandi *shuyukh*, from the earliest days, admonished their students not to worship the *shaykh* and to understand that there are levels of *wilaayat* (authority); we are placed where we are placed, and with whom, for a purpose. The guide is not the destination, but the means, as the Prophet is the *waseelah* (means) to Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). The guide's physical presence, availability, words, *niyyah* (intention), thoughts, and directed transmissions are a means to the means. He is the navigator and, as such, the companion and, at times, the co-pilot on the journey.

The companionship of a sincere, pious, and knowledgeable individual will inspire us with piety and knowledge, love, understanding, patience, perseverance, humility, and gratitude. Hopefully, it will not only reinforce what is good and kind in us, but it will lift us on his shoulders, as the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) lifted Hazrat Ali on his shoulders, in an expression of support—and some would say, an affirmation that the guided can learn to see even further than the guide.

ORIGINS OF THE SUFI TRADITION

The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) is the origin—the first *shaykh*, if you will—of all our lines. So I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the foundation of the Sufi tradition, as it can be found in the life of our Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and his companions (students).

Remember, the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) emigrated to Madinah in-order to establish a base of true supporters and Companions (*Sahaabah*). Those who are his companions have been given that title by God. No one can be a Companion of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) except those that were with him. This is a rank no one can reach. But the value of and necessity of companionship on the journey remains, just as there were the *taba'een* (followers) and *taba' taba'een* (followers of the followers).

The Naqshbandi line begins with Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, and it is generally believed that the first transmission occurred during the Prophet's (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) migration from Makkah to Madinah, in the cave of Thawr. It is one day's distance from Makkah. The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) stayed there three days. Why did the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) stay in that cave? Why was he unable to continue? The unfolding of the secrets occurred in that cave. In the cave of Thawr, Allah taught the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) how to "remember God" (*dhikru-Llaah*) which He, in turn, teaches Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*).

When the Prophet went into that cave, a spider and a dove came and made a house over the door in order that no one would suspect that he might be inside. We all know this story, but it is not only a story of safe escape from Makkah. It is a love story as well, and a story of imparting knowledge to the *sirr*, the place of secrets. When love for someone is pure, the love of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) will accompany that person.

The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) took Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) with him on this *hijrah* to the cave. But the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the door."

He left Hazrat Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) in his bed. In order to enter to the Prophet and to come to the knowledge that the Prophet is giving, you have to enter through the door. That door is Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). We are of five *tareeqahs*: Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi through Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) and Shadhili, Qadiri, and Chishti through Hazrat Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, **"Whatever God has poured into my heart, I poured into the heart of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq."** The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) referred again to the secret of Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) when he said, **"Abu Bakr does not surpass you because of fasting or praying more, but because of a secret that took root in his heart."** That is why the two sources of Sufi *tareeqah* (paths) and *haqeeqah* come from Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) and from Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*).

The Prophet's comment about Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) is the secret of the cave. To represent his own body, the Prophet put Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) in his bed prior to his departure from Makkah to Madinah. Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) represents the external, and Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) represents what is interior. In that sacred cave, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) ordered the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to pass the secrets He has given to the heart of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) passed to him the secret of his knowledge. That is the secret behind the Tradition, which came from Abu Hurayra (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*),

I have retained from the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) two vessels of knowledge. I have disseminated one vessel of knowledge among people. But if I were to give the other vessel of knowledge, they would cut my throat.

That is hidden knowledge. That knowledge secreted in the heart.

So he kept it secret, but he passed it on to his successor, Salman al-Farsi (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). Then Salman (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) passed it to Qasim (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) the son of Abu Bakr (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). Then Qasim (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*) passed it to Jafar as-Sadiq (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhū*). That secret was passed from heart to heart, East and West, North

and South, by means of his caliphs. That is the origin of Naqshbandi Order. But be assured, these secrets or at least the means to discovering them within your self, were handed on and have come down to us to this very day. This knowledge can never be contained between the two covers of a book. It cannot be written down because it is renewed and revived, moment to moment. It is never exactly the same, but it is always appropriate to *zaman* and *makan*, time and place.

TRADITION OF THE TEACHER

Through the affinity (*munaasabah*) or mutual attraction, affection, and indeed love that reflects the love between Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) and the one who loves Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), these secrets are revealed. This is why Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says: **"Nothing can contain Me except the heart of the believer."** The Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, **"The heart of a believer is the house of God."**

Some people suspect this love/relationship and are concerned that it limits their choices, their other relationships or even familial duties. It does not negate any of the challenges in life, but it gives us a perspective on them that is spiritually meaningful for our life. It does not replace the normal strivings of people, or our personal responsibility, rather it gives us the support and the tools to achieve the highest levels of personal outer and inner success.

This tradition of the student-teacher relationship has many facets: verbal and non verbal, personal and collective, individual and with accompaniment, exclusive and inclusive, servant and free-man/woman, affirming of family and expanded to a larger family (*ummah*). In the relationship with the *shaykh* and the *subbat* with the fellow seekers, one sees clearly their place and their role, as assigned to their soul by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). Destiny becomes a moment-to-moment reality that embraces choice and no-choice, submission and initiative. But it must be surround by love, and kindness, compassion and mercy, tolerance and patience, peace and harmony. Otherwise, one is misled by their emotions or mental state, their ideology and ego and by Khannās, the whisperer to wrong actions, and ultimately evil.

Still, at times the seeker finds them selves in some kind of quandary, at a crossroads, or with an illness that needs to be treated. No matter how much you know the remedies, no matter how much education you have or how well you know the facts, it is necessary to consult someone who can actually open the doorway, whose intuition is better developed than their knowledge, and whose steadfastness is firm, whose dedication is needed.

ON IDHN

To traverse any path, a guide is required. But not everyone is a teacher, and not every healer has the cure to every illness. A famous teacher, Imam Qureyshi said, *"As long as Islam lasts, there will be no time in history when there are not guides."* Certainly, today we can find people who have a lot of spiritual or religious qualifications, scholars, and *imams*, who have come from the East to the West. That doesn't mean that everyone with a high degree of spiritual knowledge has the ability to guide. Even people with a high degree of spiritual sensitivity might not be able to guide. That is why it has been shown, again and again, over the centuries that only a person who has received *ijazah* from a living teacher who in turn received *ijazah* from a qualified guide can guide. It is actually by virtue of this *ijazah* that we call **transmission** that the science of spiritual education, which is an education of the soul/*ruh* and of the heart/*qalb*, can be learned. It can't be learned from just writing or reading or even speaking. I will return later to this subject of transmission, as it is an essential part of our line and our teachings, indeed the reason for the guide.

It is on the authority of the chain of spiritual guides/*silsila* that goes back to Prophet Mohammed (*salla-Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) that this teaching and capability is perpetuated in an unbroken line. That is why an unbroken line is important, to the extent that it is said that whoever has *not* received their *ijazah* or *idhn* (permission) from a living *shaykh* has no right to either the title of *shaykh*, nor do they have the capability to transmit. This process of spiritual selection and election has a certain power, *baraka*, in it. Shaykh Ibn Abbas al-Mursi (*radiya-Llahu 'anhu*), a great Shadhili teacher, said:

No teacher reveals himself to his students if he has not been determined by his own aspirations and inspirations, and if he has not received the idhn from Allah (Subhaanahu wa ta'ala) and Prophet Mohammed (salla-Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam). It is by this baraka of this authorization and the implicit power of sirr, the secret power, that our cause is sustained and the state of his disciples is protected.

The protection he refers to is a protection that comes **through** the *Shaykh*, via the *idhn* that his *shaykh* got from his *shaykh*. The protection that comes to my students is from the *idhn* and *ijazah* that I received from my *shaykh*, from Hazrat Azad Rasool (*'alayhi rahmatu-Llah*), who got it from his *shaykh*, Mohammed Sayed Khan (*radiya-Llahu 'anhu*). It comes from what comes before me, and before him, and before him. There is an element of the *Rahmat* (Mercy) of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) in this kind of authorization that the teacher receives; there is the trust of the Divine Secret. It is by that power that the guide acquires the capability and capacity to create and leave spiritual progeny. The efficacy of this process, the efficient method and richness of this process of utilizing the *baraka* of this Divine Secret is what transforms people, by virtue of the *idhn* and the *ijazah*.

This process of transformation is the same transformation that happens to a seed when water touches it, or when it is in the dirt and it becomes renewed and propagates. The fruit of the transformation is the light in the hearts of the people, which is really the light of Nebi Mohammed (*salla-Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) in our hearts. This seed of light can only grow to its full potential when the *mureed* receives what they have committed themselves to receive through the *bay'at*. The *bay'at* is the official entry into the way, but there are informal *bay'ats* also.

ON BAY'AT

I have mentioned *bay'at* as the official door to the path, so let me take a minute here to speak about this subject. There are misconceptions and misunderstandings about this practice. Many people balk at this idea, or wonder why it is necessary, or alternatively seek to throw themselves into it without careful consideration. There are dimensions of significance to *bay'at* that cannot be known until one has entered into this contract. Similar to other commitments, such as

marriage, having children, moving to a new place, or embarking on a new career, one learns much more about the realities of this commitment once one has embarked on it.

To give *bay'at* means to submit wholeheartedly to the *shaykh* and to commit oneself to follow certain things and refrain from certain other things. It signifies not only the seeker's formal affiliation with a Sufi group or master, but his or her intimate relationship with God.

Let me share with you an analogy my Shaykh used to help students understand the significant and benefit of giving *bay'at*. As I told you already, all Sufi orders have a lineage that traces back to the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). It is just like family and one who becomes a *mureed* spontaneously becomes connected to all the saints of the order, having become a member of the family. He or she thereby becomes a deserving candidate for help from the elders of the Order.

We know that if an accident befalls a registered student at the university, the authorities, staff members, and fellow students of the university will take action and the injured student will get the attention needed immediately. On the other hand, if one is not a registered student, there will be nobody to take care of one's needs. Similarly, when a person becomes a *mureed* or *mureeda*, he or she becomes a registered *saalik* (journeyer) on the path and will constantly obtain assistance in every aspect of the journey. In this way, we benefit from the presence of the guide, the history of the guide, the training of the guide, and a greater sense and attentiveness to the Divine Presence.

When we allow ourselves to realize that we are submitting ourselves to the Prophet, and when we as *mureeds* trust what the guide has given and participate in that process of authorization by accepting it, then we receive an *idhn* also. Our *idhn* is to make *dhikru-Llaah*, not just the repetition of words but the deep profound process of seeing and affirming the meaning of that 'seeing.' **"Wheresoever you turn your face, there is the countenance of Allah."** (2:115) Our *idhn* is to invoke Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), usually through a combination of various practices and forms that have come down through those teachings

through a *wadheefah* or *wird*, and in our case, *niyyah* that come from transmissions that awaken the subtle organs of perception, the *laṭaa'if*.

AN OPEN DOOR

As a seeker on this path we are seeking admittance to a demanding and rewarding "school" that requires a great deal of effort to graduate and [even more effort to] continue studying (post graduate) to maintain the license to serve and even to teach. If accepted, and if we matriculate, we not only benefit personally from that process, but we learn to live aware of the Divine Presence. We have the tools and the means to assist others. We are attaching ourselves to a whole line of knowledge, experience, and capabilities—more than that, to blessings/*baraka*.

When we open this door—whether formally in the giving of *bay'at* or through informal *bay'at* in maintaining that respectful *munaasabah* (cordial relationships with the *shaykh*)—we are opening the corridor for the transmission of light into our lives and our souls. As with any transmission of energy there is the metaphor and reality of 'light,' or enlightenment in spiritual terms. This light is the revelation itself that come from Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), through the Prophet Mohammad (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), who is, you remember, the true *waseelah*/means to that continuing enlightenment.

This light is transmitted to the *laṭaa'if*, or the subtle organs of perception within each individual, just as physical light hitting the retina enables the perception of physical entities. This process is directly associated with the **Ever-Living** (*al-Hayyu*) Divine Presence, through the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*); the circuit is completed and the *laṭaa'if* are illuminated and activated.

Allah says in Qur'an:

Oh Prophet, surely We have sent you as a witness and bringer of good news, and as a warner and a summoner to Allah, by His Permission, and as a light-giving lamp. (33:45-46)

The light, the Nuur-i-Mohammed is always present in our lives; but the complete circuit, the connection, opens the way to a light that pierces every veil: veils of ignorance, or distraction, or destructive desires, or simply the habitual patterns that cause us to not see what is truly before us. Because it pierces these veils, there is no way that anything can be hidden from or be invisible to that light; therefore, that light will shine on our obedience and disobedience, our good qualities and bad qualities, our efforts and negligence, our enthusiasm and indolence. It will reveal everything to us.

Through this process, one becomes aware of their state and the complexity and the seriousness of the journey to awakening; it requires a deep commitment and yearning for knowledge or clarity. That's why it takes courage to be on this path. What is seen by the seeker is not necessarily revealed in obviously ways recognizable to others, but it is revealed to us in very personal and appropriate ways, for our own character and personality, and we are able to perceive its effects.

RESISTING SUBMISSION

In conclusion, let me say that such a commitment, especially in today's culture and intellectual setting, appears to the cursory sight to be contrary to the popular ideas of individualism, freedom of self, or independent judgment. Hence, it is often culturally and intellectually unacceptable to many "educated" individuals. Yet, how often do we stop to think and consider all the things we "submit to" on a daily basis? We submit to the reality of needing a job, of paying bills, of getting a cold; we submit to the advice of a doctor, a nutritionist, or an employer. We submit to all kinds of things on a daily basis, for short term and long term gain.

Why do we resist submitting to the guidance of a *shaykh* or the commitment to do a daily practice? Think back to the story of Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) and al-Khidr that I began with. We all know the story. At each step, each incident, Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) questioned and doubted al-Khidr; he resisted the submission necessary to be a student of al-Khidr. The patience and perseverance sought by Sidna Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) has been sought by seekers for centuries.

At various times and places the impact of Sufism has had profound influence. We know those times and places by the people who have adopted its methods and perspective: Imām al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Arabī, Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī, Abdel Qādir Jilānī, Abul Hasan as Shādhilī, Ibn Ata'illah as-Sakandarī, Nizāmuddīn Auliya, Bahā'uddīn Naqshband, and many, many others (may Allah's blessing be upon all of their souls). They were all followed by highly esteemed *mureeds/khalifas* who not only further clarified the teachings of Islam and the means of Sufism for generations, but exemplified the character of a true Muslim and Sufi, and preserved the unique and effective methods, adjusting them to the time and the place.

At the core of this process lies a submission, and by definition of *tasleem*, Islam. The subtle way of the relationship of *munaasabat* between the *shaykh* and the *mureed* reflects the deeper and profound submission that every Muslim must make to be truly a Muslim. It encompasses an *adab* (etiquette) and a personal level of independent judgment and character that allow the seeker to affirm their sincere yearning for deeper and deeper levels of truth, love, compassion, knowledge, and justice, thereby freeing themselves from the bondage of unconscious submission to their *nafs ammaara* (commanding self) and to worldly pursuits. In this submission we accept the guidance and companionship of one who will assist us in our ascent from that world of the *nafs ammaara* to the *maqams* of tranquility, fulfillment, and individual freedom.

Despite this, there is historically and today an unfortunately strong resistance to such trust and guidance. We live in a world of individualism and ego gratification, culturally and individually. We deny the value of personal humility and the high status of the *abd*; we even dislike the words "submission," "student," and "servant." Indeed, it is, at the core, a lack of humility that secretly and invisibly undermines ones basic Islam while keeping the external forms of being a Muslim.

But it is not our external forms that Allah looks at; it is our hearts. In a *hadith* (tradition) narrated by Muslim in the Chapter of al-Birr, the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

*Inna-Llaah laa yandhuru ilaa ajasadikum wa laa ilaa suwarikum
wa lakin yandhuru ilaa qulubikum.*

**Surely, Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your
faces, but He looks at your hearts.**

Only when the hearts of the believers begin to see the reality of the Divine Presence everywhere; only when the veils have been lifted by the sincere practice, personal sacrifice, loving service, and the inclusive message and love of the Creator and the creation will there be any hope for a true renewal/*tajdeed* of faith.

As we move through this day and our life, seeking humility and submission, let's not forget:

*Wa li-Llahi-l-mashriq wa-l-maghrib. Fa aynamaa tuwalluu
fathamma wajhu-Llaah. Inna-Llaaha Waastun 'Aleem.*

**And to Allah Belong the East and the West. And in
which ever direction you turn, there is the Presence of
Allah. Truly Allah is Vast, All-Knowing. (Qur'an 2:115)**

CLOSING DU^cAA

*Bismi-Llaahi-l-ladhii laa yadurru maa-smihi shay'un
fee-l-ardi wa laa fee-s-samaa'i; wa huwa-s-Samee'u-l-Aleem.
Wa laa hawalaa wa laa quwwata illaa bi-Llaahi-l-'Alim-l-'Adheem.
Subhaana Rabbika rabbi-l-'izzati ammaa yasifuun.
wa salaamun 'alaa-l-mursaliin. Wa-l-hamdu li-Llaahi Rabbi-l-'Alamiin.*

In the Name of Allah, with Whose Name nothing on the earth and in
the heaven can harm; and He is All-Hearing and All-Knowing.
And there is no strength nor power save in Allah,
the Sublime, the Tremendous.

Limitless in His glory is thy Sustainer, the Lord of Almightyness,
[exalted] above anything that [human beings]
may devise by way of definition!

And peace be upon His message-bearers!
And all praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the Worlds!